



# BEST OF BRITISH

Britain is fast moving away from the staple meat-and-two-veg meals that gave the country a culinary reputation for stodgy. Welcome to the new cuisine scene, focusing on home-grown produce and healthy eating *Words Giselle Whiteaker*



## FROM DIMLY-LIT EATERIES TO MICHELIN-STAR FINE DINING,

London is brimming with food outlets. Restaurants are springing up in rapid succession and chefs have become the new celebrities. The contemporary cuisine scene is buzzing, with clear trends shining through.

“Customers are gravitating towards restaurants that are trying different things,” says chef Daniel Edwards of The Lido Cafe. “The capital’s eaters are moving away from chain restaurants and discovering why London is one of the world’s best gastronomic cities.”

The Lido Cafe sits in Brixton’s Brockwell Park by the side of the atmospheric Art Deco lido. On balmy evenings, diners watch the ripples on the water from the terrace overlooking the pool as they feast on a menu combining Mediterranean and modern British influences. The focus is on “... carefully chosen English produce, including rare breed meats and native fish caught on day boats, served with an eye on Southern European and North African influenced flavours,” says Edwards.

Edwards’ signature dish is pistachio and cardamom tart with candied orange peel and orange sorbet, a delightfully-light treat that sits well with the pool-side ambience. “We do not compromise on the ingredients we use,” Edwards declares. “We use extremely high-quality produce served simply to make the most of the flavour.”

The Lido is not alone in sourcing home-grown produce. Chef Anthony Demetre from the Michelin-starred Wild Honey restaurant in Mayfair prides himself on seasonal and modern cuisine. “Ideally, we like to buy as much indigenously as possible,” he explains.

Recently refurbished, Wild Honey, alongside its sister restaurants Arbutus and Les Deux Salons, offers beautifully-simple food at affordable prices.

Demetre is renowned for transforming cheaper cuts of meat into Michelin star-worthy dishes, such as the rabbit saddle confit shoulder and warm freekah salad, although he claims his signature dish is a squid and mackerel burger with razor clams. This fits with a trend Demetre has noticed towards what he terms “dude food” — think burgers and grilled chicken. Simple food, cooked well.

Newcomer, The Imperial Arms in Chelsea, is also looking to capitalise on the local and responsibly-sourced trend. The King’s Road landmark, with its stunning Victorian façade has long been a popular venue, but this month sees it



ABOVE: The Lido Cafe in Brixton’s Brockwell Park; the casual ambience of recently-refurbished Wild Honey; chef Anthony Demetre, of Michelin-starred Wild Honey; Tom Hope, the young chef behind The Imperial Arms.

## FROM THE CHEFS’ MOUTHS:

### DANIEL EDWARDS RECOMMENDS:

Nopi in Soho, for being at the forefront of interesting dishes with world influence. [www.nopi-restaurant.com](http://www.nopi-restaurant.com)

### ANTHONY DEMETRE RECOMMENDS:

The Clove Club in Shoreditch for their imaginative team producing some of London’s finest food.

[www.thecloveclub.com](http://www.thecloveclub.com)

### TOM HOPE RECOMMENDS:

Claude’s Kitchen in Parsons Green for its weekly changing menu that makes the maximum use of British seasonal ingredients. [www.amusebouchelondon.com](http://www.amusebouchelondon.com)

metamorphose into London’s latest dining hotspot. Or that’s what talented chef Tom Hope will be hoping. At only 25, Hope has been running his own kitchen since he was 18, helping pioneer the gastro-pub revolution.

“At The Imperial, our main focus when creating dishes is to ensure that all the produce is sourced responsibly from suppliers that are as local as possible,” says the food prodigy. “Equally important is offering healthy and creative choices that buck the trend. There is a lot of emphasis now on healthy eating... plates of food that don’t leave you stuffed to the brim and that incorporate a lot more superfoods. Something we very much believe in.”

Hope sums up the London dining scene well. “The whole city is abuzz with food and drink,” he concludes. “I love the contrast of the traditional British pubs, with all their hustle and bustle, standing alongside some of the best restaurants in the world. No matter what it is you want to eat, as long as you’re in London, you’re in for a treat.”

Etihad Airways launched flights to London in March 2004. ●